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THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY

VOLUME X

MARCH, 1905

NUMBER 5

THE PRESENT PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE¹

The problems of social structure we find in a rather confused state at the present moment. In an earlier stage of sociological thinking considerable expectations were attached to the interpretation of social phenomena by means of biological analogies, or what was called the organic theory of society. These expectations may now be said to have been disappointed. The organic theory has almost universally been abandoned. Yet even its severest critics are likely to admit that there is some truth in or behind it, although they seem to be at a loss to explain properly what kind of truth it is.

By a curious coincidence, the three most notable representatives of that doctrine — the Russian, Paul von Lilienfeld, a man of high social standing; the German, Albert Schäffle, with a reputation as a political economist; and the Englishman, Herbert Spencer, whose fame needs not to be emphasized — all departed from life in the year 1903, the two latter in the month of December; all in advanced old age. To these three men sociology owes a debt of gratitude, because, after Comte, they were the first — at least in Europe — to formulate a theory of social life in large outline. From all, but especially from Schäffle and Spencer, we receive, and shall continue to receive, constant and fertile impulses

¹ A paper read at the Congress of Arts and Science, Department of Sociology, St. Louis, September, 1904.

or suggestions. But I feel safe in predicting that it will soon be universally acknowledged that the foundations of their theories were not laid firmly enough for permanently supporting those boldly planned structures of thought.

For a long time past I have cherished the opinion that these authors, as well as nearly all their successors and critics, are hampered by a fundamental lack of clearness as to the subject of their inquiries—a subject which they are in the habit of designating by the very indefinite name of “a society,” or, as Schäffle puts it, “*the social body*.” Confusion of ideas invariably proceeds from a defect of analytical reasoning; that is to say, of proper distinction.

I believe and assert that three distinct conceptions, the common object of which is social life in its broadest sense, are not sufficiently, or not at all, kept apart nor even recognized as being distinct, viz., the biological, the psychological, and the sociological in what I call the exclusive sense, the subject of this third conception only being entirely new, as compared with the subjects of other sciences or departments of philosophy. It seems to me to be our fundamental task as philosophical sociologists to deduce from this last conception, and others implied in it, a system of social structure which shall contain the different notions of collective entities in their mutual dependence and connection; and I firmly trust that out of such a system will be gained a better and more profound insight into the evolution of society at large, and into its historical phases, as the life of these collective entities. It is therefore in the struggles, first, between any of these groups and the individuals composing it; second, between their different forms and kinds—for instance, the struggles between church and empire; between church and cities; between church and state; between cities and other corporations; between the sovereign state and feudal communities, and consequently established orders or estates; between single states and a federal state—it is in these and similar struggles, presupposing the *existence* of those collective entities, that the growth and decay of higher civilizations exhibit themselves most markedly.

I

When we speak of a house, a village, or a city, the idea immediately arising in our minds is that of a visible building, or of larger or smaller groups of buildings; but soon we also recollect the visible contents of these buildings, such as rooms and cellars and their furniture; or, when groups of buildings are concerned, the roads and streets between them. The words "house," "village," and "city" are, however, used in a different sense when we have in mind the particular contents of buildings which we call their inhabitants, especially their human occupants. Very often, at least in many languages, people are not only conceived of as the inhabitants of, but as identical with, the buildings. We say, for instance, "the entire house," "the whole village"—meaning a lot of people the idea of whom is closely connected with the idea of their usual dwelling-place. We think of them as being one with their common habitation. Nevertheless it is still a visible union of individuals which we have in mind. This visible union, however, changes into an invisible one, when it is conceived of as lasting through several generations. Now the house will become identified with a family or perhaps with a clan. In the same manner a village community or a township will be imagined as a collective being, which—although not in all, yet in certain important respects—remains the same in essence, notwithstanding a shifting of matter; that is to say, an incessant elimination of waste portions—men who die—and a constant accretion of fresh elements—born children. Here the analogy with the essential characteristics of an organism is obvious. Vegetable and animal organisms likewise are only represented by such elements as are visible at any time, and the law of life consists in this, that the remaining portions always predominate over the eliminated and the reproduced ones, and that the latter by and by move and fill up the vacant spaces, while the relations of parts—e. g., the co-operation of cells as tissues, or of tissues as organs—do not undergo a substantial change. Thus such an application of biological notions to the *social life* of mankind—as the organicist theories or methods set out to do—is not to be rejected on principle. We may, in fact, look upon any community of this

kind—maintaining itself by receiving its parts—as being a living whole or unity. This view is the more plausible if the renewal itself is merely biological, as indeed is the case in the human family, and, as we think, to a still greater extent—because a family soon disperses itself—in certain larger groups: a tribe, a nation, or a race; although there is involved in this view the question whether there is a sameness of nature—or, as we usually say, of blood—guaranteed, as it should be, by an in-and-in breeding of parents (German, *Inzucht*). Indeed, this self-conservation of a group is the less to be expected, the smaller the group; and it is well known among breeders that it is necessary for the life of a herd not to continue too long selecting sires of the same breed, but from time to time to refresh the blood by going beyond the limits of a narrow parentage, and crossing the race by mixtures with a different stock.

At any rate, this is what I should call a purely *biological* aspect of collective human life, in so far as their conception is restricted to the mere existence of a human group, which, so to speak, is self-active in its maintenance of life.

This aspect, however, does not suffice when we consider social units of a local character, which also continue their existence, partly in the same, but partly in a different manner. With reference to them we do not think exclusively of a natural *Stoffwechsel*, as it is effected by births and deaths of the individuals composing the body, but we also consider the moving to and fro of living men, women, and children, the ratio of which, like the ratio of births and deaths, may cause an increase or a decrease of the whole mass, and *must* cause one or the other if they do not balance. In consequence of this, we also have less reason to expect a biological identity of the stock of inhabitants at different times, than a lasting connection between a part of space (the place), or rather a piece of the soil, and a certain group of men who dwell in that place and have intercourse with each other, although the place itself grows with the number of its inhabitants, and although even among these inhabitants there be, for instance, not one direct descendant of those who occupied the place, say, a hundred years ago. We may, it is true, take it to be the rule

that at least a certain nucleus of direct descendants keeps alive through many generations—a rule so much more certain if it is a large place, a whole region, or even a country that we have in mind. Still we shall not hold this to be a *conditio sine qua non* for acknowledging the village or the city to be the same; it being in this respect much more relevant that the nucleus of the place, of the “settlement,” has endured and has preserved itself through the ages. Now, since place and region, air and climate, have a very considerable effect upon the intelligence and sentiment of the inhabitants, and seeing that a considerable change may not justly be expected with respect to this, except when the minds as well as the external conditions of the newcomers are totally different from those of the older strata, we may consider the identity of a place, in so far as it is founded upon the social connection of men with a part of the soil, as a *psychological* identity, and call this aspect of social life a psychological aspect. There can be no doubt that this psychological aspect is in great part dependent upon the biological aspect, and is, as a rule, closely interwoven with it. Yet it needs but little reflection to recognize that both are also to a certain extent separate and independent of each other. The subject-matter of a social psychology is different from the subject-matter of a social biology, though there exist a great many points of contact between them, and though both, apart from the foundations here given to them, may be applied to animal as well as to human societies.

II

Neither of the above-mentioned conceptions of a continuous unity or whole implies that the essential characteristic of the unity is perceived and recognized by those who belong to it, much less that it is perceived by others, by outsiders. And this is the third idea, by far the most important one for the present consideration—the idea of what I purpose to designate by the name of a *corporation*, including under it all social units whatever, in so far as they have this trait in common, that the mode of existence of the unity or whole itself is founded upon the consciousness of its existence, and consequently that it perpetuates itself by the conception of its reality being transmitted from one generation to

the next one; which will not happen unless it be done on purpose by teaching, and generally in the form of tradition. This evidently presupposes human reason and human will, marking off sharply this third genus from any kind of animal subhuman society.

We are now to give closer attention to this conception. For the most part, though not always, it is the conception of a unity different from the aggregate of members; the idea of a psychical or moral *body*, capable of willing and of acting like a single human being; the idea of a self or person. This person, of course, is an artificial or fictitious one. It represents indeed, as the former two conceptions did, a unity persisting through the change of its parts, but this unity and identity persisting in the multitude are neither biological nor directly and properly psychological, but must, in distinction from these, be considered as specifically *sociological*; that is to say, while the second is the social consciousness or social mind itself, this is the product of it, and can be understood only by looking into the human soul, and by perceiving thoughts and wills which not only have a common drift and tendency, but are creators of a common work.

The idea, however, of a body capable of willing and acting is, as said above, not always, and not necessarily, implied in the idea of a sociological unit. There is a conception preceding it, as protoplasm precedes individual bodies; namely, the general idea of a society (or a community, if this important distinction is adverted to), which is not essentially different from our second idea of a psychological unit, except in this one respect, accessory to it, that the idea of this unit be present somehow in the minds of the people who feel or know themselves as belonging to it. This conception is of far-reaching significance, being the basis of all conceptions of a social, as contrasted with a political, corporation. It therefore comprises especially those spheres of social life which are more or less independent of political organization, among which the economical activity of men is the most important, including, as it does, domestic life as well as the most remote international relations between those who are connected exclusively by the ties of commercial interest. But practically it is of little

consequence whether this general idea be considered as psychological or as sociological, unless we precisely contemplate men who consciously maintain their own conception of their own social existence, in distinction from other ideas relating to it, chiefly when it is put in contrast to the idea of a political corporation, and the political corporation of highest import is concerned—the state. And it was exactly in these its shifting relations to the state that the idea of society proper—though without recognition of its subjective character—was evolved about fifty years ago by some German theorists—notably Lorenz Stein, Rudolph Gneist, and Robert Mohl—who were more or less strongly under the sway of Hegelian philosophy, seeing that Hegel in his *Rechtsphilosophie* develops his idea of human corporate existence under the threefold heading of (1) the family, as “thesis,” (2) civil society as “antithesis,” and (3) the state, as “synthesis” of the two former.

But, though I myself lay considerable stress upon this general notion of society, in juxtaposition and opposition to the state or political society, I still regard it as more indispensable to a theory of social structure to inquire into the nature and causes of what may be called, from the present point of view, genuine corporations; that is, those conceived of as being capable of willing and acting like a single individual endowed with reason and self-consciousness. The question arises how a “moral person” may be considered as possessing this power.

Evidently this is an impossibility, unless one single individual, or several together, are willing and acting *in the name of* that fictitious being. And in order justly to be taken for the volitions and acts of an individual distinct from their own individualities, those volitions and acts must be distinguishable by certain definite marks from the rest of their willing and acting, which they do in their own name; they must be differentiated formally. There must be a tacit or an open understanding, a sort of covenant or convention, that only volitions and acts so differentiated shall be considered as volitions and acts of the said moral person whom that one or those several individuals are supposed to represent. By the way, this question of marks and signs, consensual or con-

ventional, by which a thing, physical or moral, not only is recognized as such, but by which its value (or what it is *good for*) is differentiated from its existence (or what it *is*), pervades all social life and mind, and may be called the secret of it. It is clear that certain signs may easily be fixed or invented whereby the volitions and acts of a single individual may be differentiated from the rest as being representative. But how if there are more than one, who only occasionally have one will and act together, and who cannot be supposed to agree in their feelings as soon as they are required to represent their moral person? It is well known that these must be "constituted" as an *assembly* or as a whole capable by its constitution to deliberate and, what is more, to resolve and act. It must be settled by their own or by the will of another person (1) under what conditions, and with respect to what subject-matters, their resolutions shall be considered as representing declarations of will of their own body; and (2) under what conditions, and with respect to what subject-matters, declarations of will of this body shall be valid as declarations of will of the moral person they represent.

It is therefore the *constitution* of a multitude into a unity which we propose as a fourth mode, and as a necessary consequence of the third one, unless the moral person be represented exclusively by a single man or woman as a natural person. The Many constitute themselves or are constituted as a body, which is, as far as it may be, similar to a natural person in such relations as are essential precisely for the notion of a person. Consequently, this body also is a unity, but a unity conceived *a priori* as being destined for a definite purpose, viz., the representation of a moral person—the third or sociological kind of unity. And it is different from that third notion by this very relation only, which evidently cannot be inherent in that person himself. That, in consequence of this relation, it has a visible existence apart from its own idea, while the moral person represented is nothing beyond his own idea. We may distinguish, therefore, between five modes of existence in a moral person represented by a body: (1) the ideal existence in the minds of its members; (2) the ideal existence of the body constituted, which represents the moral

person, being as well in the minds of the natural persons who compose that body, as in the minds of members of the corporation generally; (3) the visible existence of this body, being the assembly of natural persons, willing and acting under certain forms; (4) the intelligible existence of this assembly, being conditioned by a knowledge, on the part of those who externally or theoretically perceive it, of its constitution and its meaning; (5) the intelligible existence of the moral person or the body represented, being conditioned of a knowledge of the relation between this corporation and the body representing it, implying the structure of the former in the first, and of the latter in the second instance.

The visible existence of an assembly means that members are visible as being assembled, but the assembly as a body can be recognized only by a reflecting spectator who knows what those forms mean, who "realizes" their significance, who *thinks* the assembly. Of course, a corporation also, apart from its representation, can be perceived only mentally, by outsiders as well as by its own members, and these are different perceptions (distinguished here as ideal and intelligible existence): members perceiving it directly as a product of their own will, and therefore in a way as their property (a thing which they own); and outsiders perceiving it only indirectly, by knowing the person or body that represents it; this being an external perception only, unless it be supplemented by a knowledge of its peculiar mode of being, that is, of its constitution and of the relations which members bear to the whole, and the whole to its members.

But it is, above all, in this respect that great differences exist between different kinds of corporations. The first question is whether individuals feel and think themselves as founders or authors or at least as representative ideal authors of their own corporation. Let us take an obvious example. Suppose a man and a woman contract a marriage (we waive here all questions of church or state regulations for making the marriage tie public). They are said to found a family. Now, the children springing from this union and growing up in this family cannot justly feel and think themselves as the creators or authors of it, as long as

they are dependent upon their parents. However, they partake of it more and more consciously, and some day they may take upon themselves the representation of this whole internally and externally, in place of their father and mother. They may learn to feel and to think of themselves as bearers of the personality of this ideal being, playing, so to speak, the parts of the authors and founders, whom they also may survive, and will survive in the normal course of human events; and they may continue the identity of the family beyond the death of their parents. They may maintain the continuity of this identical family, even when new families have sprung from it which may or may not regard themselves as members of the original one. The proposition that it exists still is true at least for those who will its truth, and who act upon this principle; nay, it is by their thought and will that they are creating it anew, as it was made originally by the wills of the first two persons. A different question is whether the existence of this corporation will be recognized and acknowledged by others, who may stand in relations to its members, or may simply be impartial theoretical spectators.

But, further, there is this fundamental difference in the relation of individuals to that ideal entity which they think and will, whether they be its real or merely its representative authors, viz. : (1) they may look upon the corporation, which they have created really or ideally, as upon a thing existing for its own sake, as an end in itself, although it be at the same time a means for other ends; or (2) they may conceive it clearly as a mere tool, as nothing but an instrument for their private ends, which they either naturally have in common, or which accidentally meet in a certain point.

The first case appears in a stronger light, if they consider the social entity as really existing, and especially if they consider their corporation as a living being; for a real thing, and especially a living thing, has always some properties of its own. The latter has even something like a will of its own; it cannot be conceived as being disposable, divisible, applicable, and adaptable at pleasure to any purpose, as a means to any end—this being the notion of pure matter, as it exists only in our imagination; and therefore

a thing which has merely a nominal existence would be really nothing but a mass of such imaginary matter, absolutely at one's disposal, offering no resistance, being stuff in itself, that is to say, potentially anything one may be able to make, to knead, to shape, or to construe out of it (of course, real matter may and will more or less approach to this idea). On the other hand, to think of an ideal thing as being ideal is not the same as to think of it as imaginary matter; but if one aims at a certain object, if one follows out one's designs, one is constrained by a psychological necessity to break resistances and to subject things as well as wills to one's own will; one tends to make them all alike, as "wax in one's hand," to remove or to oppress their own qualities and their own wills, so as to leave, as far as possible, nothing but a dead and unqualified heap of atoms, a something of which imaginary matter is the prototype. Of course, it is only as a tendency that this dissolving and revolutionary principle is always active, but its activity is manifest everywhere in social life, especially in modern society, and characterizes a considerable portion of the relations of individuals to each other and consequently to their corporations. As long as men think and regard "society"—that is to say, their clan or their polis, their church or their commonwealth—as real and as truly existing; nay, when they even think of it as being alive, as a mystical body, a supernatural person—so long will they not feel themselves as its masters; they will not be likely to attempt using it as a mere tool, as a machine for promoting their own interests; they will look upon it rather with awe and humility than with a sense of their own interest and superiority. And, in consequence of feelings of this kind, they even forget their own authorship—which, as a rule, will indeed be an ideal one only; they will feel and think themselves, not creators, but creatures of their own corporations. This is the same process as that which shows itself in the development of men's regular behavior toward their gods, and the feeling and thinking just mentioned are always closely related to, or even essentially identical with, religious feeling and thinking. Like the gods themselves, to whom so regularly *la cité antique*, with its temples and sanctuaries, is dedicated, the city or corpora-

tion itself is supposed to be a supernatural eternal being, and consequently existing not only in a real, but in an eminent sense.

But, of course, all feelings of this kind are but to a limited extent liable to retard the progress of a consciousness of individual interests, or, as it is commonly spoken of — with a taint of moral reproach — of selfishness. As a matter of fact, it is the natural ripening of consciousness and thinking itself which makes reflection prevail over sentiment, and which manifests itself, first and foremost, in reflection upon a man's own personal interest, in the weighing and measuring of costs and results; but, secondly, also in a similar reflection upon some common interest or business which a person, from whatever motive, selfish or not, has made his own affair; and, thirdly, in that unbiased interest in and reflection upon the nature and causes of things and events, of man's happiness and social existence, which we call scientific or philosophical.

All reflection is, in the first instance, analytical. I have spoken already of the dissolving principle which lies in the pursuing of one's own personal affairs, of which the chase after profit is but the most characteristic form. But the same individualistic standpoint is the standpoint, or at least the prevailing tendency, of science also. It is *nominalism* which pervades science and opposes itself to all confused and obscure conceptions, closely connected, as it is, with a striving after distinctness and clearness and mathematical reasoning. This nominalism also penetrates into men's supposed collective realities (supernatural or not), declaring them to be void and unreal, except in so far as individual and real men have consented to make such an artificial being, to construct it, and to build it up mentally. Knowledge and criticism oppose themselves to faith and intuition, in this as in most other respects, and try to supplant them. To know how a church or a state is created means the downfall of that belief in its supernatural essence and existence which manifestly is so natural to human feeling and intellect. The spirit of science is at the same time the spirit of freedom and of individualistic self-assertion, in contradiction and in opposition to the laws and ties of custom — as well as of religion, so intimately connected and homologous with custom —

which seem entirely unnatural and irrational to analytical reasoning. This reasoning always puts the questions: What is it good for? Does it conduce to the welfare of those whom it pretends to bind or to rule? Is it in consonance with right reason that men should impose upon themselves the despotism of those laws and of the beliefs sanctioning them? The classical answer has been given in a startling fashion by one whom Comte called the father of revolutionary philosophy. There is, says Thomas Hobbes, a realm of darkness and misery, founded upon superstition and false philosophy, which is the church; and there is, or there might be, a realm of light and of happiness, founded upon the knowledge of what is right and wrong; that is to say, of the laws of nature, dictated by reason and by experience, to check hostile and warlike individual impulses by a collective will and power; this realm is the true state, that is to say, the idea and model of its purely rational structure, whether it may exist anywhere as yet or not. Hobbesianism is the most elaborate and most consistent system of the doctrine commonly known as that of "natural law" (*Naturrecht*), including, as it always did, a theory of the state. As a matter of fact, this doctrine has been abandoned almost entirely, especially in Germany, where it had been exerting a very considerable influence in the century which preceded the French Revolution, when even kings and absolutist statesmen were among its open adherents. It has been controverted and abandoned ever since the first quarter of the nineteenth century—a fact which stands in manifest connection with the great reaction and restoration in the political field following the storms of that revolution and of Bonapartist rule in Europe. There is hardly a liberal school left now which dares openly profess that much-debated theory of a "social compact." This, I believe, is somewhat different in the United States. As far as my knowledge goes, this theory—that is to say, an individualistic construction of society and of the state—is still the ordinary method employed in this country for a deduction of the normal relations between state or society, on the one hand, and individuals, on the other; for, as needs no emphasis, it is not the opinion of an original contract in the historical sense that is to be held in any way as a

substantial element of the theory. And yet the obvious criticism of that pseudo-element has been the most powerful argument against the whole theory, which consequently has seldom met with an intelligent and just appreciation in these latter days. And it is in opposition to it that, apart from a revival of theological interpretations, the recent doctrine of society or state as an organism has become so popular for a time. This doctrine, of course, was an old one. Not to speak of the ancients, in the so-called Middle Ages it had preceded the contract theory, as it has supplemented it in more modern times. It was, indeed, coupled with the theological conceptions and religious ideals so universally accepted in those days although it was not dependent upon them. The doctrine of St. Thomas and of Dante, however, contains a theory of the universal state; that is to say, of the empire, not a theory of society, of which the conception had not yet been formed, as we may safely say that a consciousness of it did not exist. This traditional organicism — applied as well to the church, the mystic body, of which Christ was the supposed head — has been transferred of late to “society,” after it had regained fresh authority as a political doctrine. However, the conception of a “society,” as distinguished from political or religious bodies, is much more vague and indefinite. Either it is to be taken in the first and second sense, which I have pointed out as a biological or a psychological aspect of collective life, in which case organic analogies hold, but the whole consideration is not properly sociological; or it may be taken in our third, or sociological, sense, in which case it implies much less than any corporation the idea of what may be called an organization. It is well known that a lively controversy has been aroused about the new organicist theory, as proposed by Mr. Spencer and others, chiefly among those sociologists who center about the *Institut international* of Paris, where the late lamented M. Tarde played so prominent a part. M. Tarde has been among the foremost combatants against the vague analogies of organicism; and I fully agree with most of his arguments as set forth in the third sociological congress of 1897. I even flatter myself on having anticipated some of them, in an early paper of mine upon Mr. Spencer’s sociological work; which

paper, however, did not become known beyond the small public of the *Philosophische Monatshefte* (1888). I have especially, and to a greater degree than M. Tarde, insisted upon the radical difference between a physiological division of labor and that division which is a cardinal phenomenon of society. I said: If we justly call it a division of labor that England manufactures cotton and China produces tea, and that the two countries exchange their products, then there is not and has not been a common labor or function preceding this division and dividing itself, as in the case of an organism; no state of society being historically known where China and England were one whole, working in harmony upon the spinning-wheel and upon the tea plant. This is far from being true; each had its own historical development, until they met in the mutual want of barter; and even this consideration implies that the countries themselves may justly be said to entertain trade and commerce with each other, though this is hardly more than a *façon de parler* with respect to a country like China. It may be objected that there is a better analogy, if we think of a primitive household, where labor is indeed one and is shifting among members of the community, while at a later stage it splits up into several families, some cultivating the soil, some becoming warriors or priests, or artisans and tradesmen. And in the same way a village community, even an independent township like the ancient or mediæval city, and a whole territory of which a city is the center, may reasonably be conceived of as one real household, of which all single households form organic parts. They would thus be contrasted with modern society, which is more adequately conceived of as a mere aggregate of individual households, each pursuing its own interest, maybe at the cost of all the others. This is my own objection, and this view is contained in my own theory of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, meaning the dualism of that primitive economical condition, surviving in many respects down to our own days, on the one hand, and "commercial" or "capitalistic" society, of which the germs are traceable in any form of what, with an abstract term, may be called communism, on the other. It is the former sense that even modern political economy

may be spoken of (as we style it in German) as "national" economy. But even if this be allowed, the organic analogy does not hold other than in a rather indefinite way. Where is the one "social body," which thus evolves its organs and members, being in its early stage like a single household or a village community, and growing to be a complex *ensemble* of manors and municipalities and great cities, some of which have their manufactures working for foreign export, some for inland consumption? Is it England that has taken a development of this kind? Or is England and Wales? Or are Scotland, and even poor conquered Ireland, to be included?

The more we should try to follow out the admirable attempt which Herbert Spencer has made in this direction of employing the organicist view as a working hypothesis, the more we should become convinced that our real insight into the lines along which social evolution travels is more hampered than promoted by that method of biological analogies.

III

But did I not say there was truth in the biological conception of social life? Indeed I did, and I say so again, if social life is considered externally, and if we speak of a group as a living whole, where life is understood in its genuine sense, that is to say, biologically. And from this point of view, as that famous term, "physiological division of labor," is borrowed from economical fact and theory, we may *vice versa* apply physiological terms to social life, considered externally. We may speak of organs and functions in a nation or society, or even with respect to mankind at large. We may metaphorically call the civilized nations the "brain" of humanity, and we may say that the United States has become an independent lobe of the cortex in the course of the last forty years. In the same way it was only lately, I understand, that your President spoke of railways as the arteries through which the blood of trade is circulating. The force of this metaphor will, I believe, not be impaired by the fact that several theorists point in more than a figurative sense to money, or credit, as the social fluid into which all substances of com-

modities are changed, and which nourishes again the social brain and social muscles; that is to say, men and women who perform mental and physical work; in consequence of which analogy banks, and their correspondence by letters and bills and checks, would, more than railways, resemble arteries and veins. Of course, it would be small trouble to adduce a number of similar ambiguities, which make sociological inquiries of this kind appear as a matter of rhetoric and poetry, but not of science.

Is there no other, no philosophical, truth at least in the comparison of a corporation to a living body? If there is, it can, according to the present view, be only in this respect, that a corporation may be thought and felt as an organic whole, upon which the members think and feel themselves dependent in such a way that they consider their own individual existence as subservient to the life of the whole. The question whether a "society" is an organism must be kept apart from the question whether there are "societies" the relations of which to their members are so qualified as to imply thoughts and feelings of that kind on the part of their members. We are well aware that social systems, which have been called by some eminent authors "ancient society," truly exhibited this characteristic trait. Why is not modern society—and, above all, the modern state—an organism in this peculiar sense?

I believe, indeed, that there is strong reason for controverting the theory in its application to these collective beings as they actually are. We live, as everybody knows, in an individualistic age, and we seek each other's society chiefly for the benefit that accrues from it; that is to say, in a comparatively small degree from motives of sentiment, and to a comparatively great extent from conscious reflection. It is this which makes us regard the state also as an instrument fit for serving our particular interests, or those we have in common with some or with all of our fellow-citizens, rather than as an organism, ideally pre-existent to ourselves, living its own life, and being entitled to sacrifices of our life and property in its behalf. It is true that in extraordinary times we live up to this view, but then we do not speak so much of society and of the state as of the fatherhood which puts for-

ward its claim to what we call our patriotism. A feeling of brotherhood and fellowship, of which in ordinary times the traces are as sadly scarce among compatriots as those who are foreigners to each other, rises, in moments of public danger, from the bottoms of our souls in effervescent bubbles. The feeling, to be sure, is more of the nature of an emotion than of a lasting sentiment. Our normal relations toward our present societies and states must not be taken as being accommodated to this extraordinary standard. They are, howsoever men may boast of their patriotism, generally of a calm and calculating character. We look upon the state, represented as it is by its government, as upon a person who stands in contractual rather than in sentimental relations to ourselves. Certainly this view is more or less developed in different countries, under different circumstances, with different individuals. But it is the one that is indorsed by the most advanced and the most conscious members of modern societies, by those powerful individuals who feel themselves as masters of their own social relations. Societies and states are chiefly institutions for the peaceful acquisition, and for the protection, of property. It is therefore the owners of property to whom we must look when we are inquiring into the prevailing and growing conceptions of society and of the state. Now, it cannot be doubted that they do not consider either society or the state as representing that early community which has always been supposed to be the original proprietor of the soil and of all its treasures, since this would imply that their own private property had only a derivative right—derived from the right and law of public property. It is just the opposite which they think and feel: the state has a derivative right of property by their allowance and their contributions; the state is supposed to act as their mandatary. And it is this view which corresponds to the facts. A modern state—it is by no means always the youngest states that are the most characteristic types of it—has little or no power over property.

I cannot refrain from quoting here, as I have done elsewhere, a few sentences of the eminent American sociologist, Mr. Lewis

Morgan, in which he sums up his reflections upon modern as contrasted with "ancient society:"

Since the advent of civilization the outgrowth of property has been so immense, its forms so diversified, its uses so expanding, and its management so intelligent in the interests of its owners, that it has become, on the part of the people, an unmanageable power. The human mind stands bewildered in the presence of its own creation.

He thinks, it is true, that

the time will come when human *intelligence* will rise to the mastery over property, and will be able to *define* the relations of the state to the property it protects, as well as the obligations and the limits of the rights of its owners.

declaring himself unwilling, as he does, to accept "a mere property career" as the final destiny of mankind.

But this outlook into a future far distant—although it was written, I believe, before there were any of the giant trusts established, and ere anybody in these states seemed to realize the dangers of the enormous power of combined capital—does not touch immediately the present question. It is the actual and real relation of the state to individuals which best reflects itself in the lack of power over property, as pointed out by Mr. Morgan, or, in other words, in the subservient position which the governments hold, in all countries more or less, toward the wealth-possessing classes. I do not say—although maybe I think—that this ought to be different; "*je ne propose rien, j'expose.*" It is merely as a theoretical question that I touch upon this point. But I am not prepared to deny that it is also the great practical problem of social structure—to reconstruct the state upon a new and enlarged foundation; that is to say, to make it, by common and natural effort, a real and independent being, an end in itself, a common wealth (spelled in two words) administered not so much for the benefit of either a minority or a majority, or even of the whole number of its citizens, as for its own perpetual interests, which should include the interests of an indefinite number of future generations—the interests of the race. It cannot be overlooked that there are at present many tendencies at work in this direction, but I believe they are in part more apparent than real. The problem, we should confess, is an overwhelming one;

and I for one do not feel at all sure that this splendid and transcendent constitution of ours will overcome its difficulties; that there will be sufficient *moral* power even if intelligence should rise to a sufficient height, for solving in a truly rational way the "social question" as a question of social structure.

To sum up the argument, I put it in the form of a few theses or propositions:

1. The object of sociological theory proper, in distinction from either biological or psychological, though these be never so closely connected with it, is the *corporation*, for the most part represented, as it is, by a constituted body.

2. Religious faith makes some of the most important corporations appear as real, organic, mystic, and even supernatural beings. Philosophical criticism is right in discovering and explaining that all are creations of man, and that they have no existence except in so far as human intellect and human will are embodied in them.

3. But nominalism is not the last word of a scientific philosophy. The existence of a corporation is fictitious indeed, but still is sometimes more than nominal. The true criterion is whether it be *conceived* and felt as a mere tool or machine, without a life of its own, or as something organic, superior to its temporary members. The true nature, however, of this conception is legible only from facts.

4. As a matter of fact, modern society and the modern state are prevailingly of a nature to correspond to an individualistic and nominalistic conception and standpoint. This is distinctly perceptible in the relation of the public power to private property.

5. This relation, and the relation dependent upon it, may substantially change in the course of time. An organic commonwealth may spring into existence which, though not sanctioned by any religious idea, and not claiming any supernatural dignity, still, as a product of human reason and conscious will, may be considered to be real in a higher sense than those products, as long as they are conceived as mere instruments serving the interests and objects of private individuals.

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